

BILL OF RIGHTS

For Residential Customers of Wastewater Utilities



The South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff wants wastewater utility customers to know their rights and responsibilities and whom to contact for assistance when they have questions or problems regarding regulated wastewater service.

BE AN INFORMED CUSTOMER. KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.

1. As a general rule, ***you have the right***, to establish wastewater service if you satisfactorily establish your credit and have no member of your household who is indebted to the wastewater utility for previously furnished wastewater service, if you provide the wastewater utility with necessary and reasonable access to the premises to be served, if your utilization of the wastewater service does not pose a hazardous or dangerous condition, and there is already wastewater service in your area. If there are no wastewater lines near your home, you may or may not have the right to have the lines extended to serve you. If the lines are extended to serve you, you may be required to pay part of the cost of the extension. If you have any questions concerning your right to wastewater service, you should contact the wastewater utility serving your area.
2. ***You have the right*** to establish your credit in any one of the following ways and to have the utility's personnel explain all these methods to you. If you can show that you have been a customer of the same wastewater utility and have not had two consecutive 30-day arrears, or more than two non-consecutive 30-day arrears in the past 24 months, or show that you have not had your wastewater service terminated for nonpayment, or provide a satisfactory guarantor or co-signer, who is a customer of the same wastewater utility with good credit, to guarantee payment of your bills if you do not pay them, or provide a letter of good credit from a reliable source, or make a cash deposit with the wastewater utility.
3. If you are required to make a cash deposit, the maximum amount cannot exceed an amount equal to an estimated two (2) months (60 days) billing for a new customer, or an amount equal to the total actual bills of the 2 highest consecutive months based on your billing history of the preceding 12 months, or portion of the year if the service is on a seasonal basis. If you make a cash deposit with the utility, ***you have the right*** to have your deposit refunded any time you discontinue service, less any unpaid balance.
4. ***You have the right***, to a refund of your deposit plus interest (which begins to accrue, at a rate prescribed by the Public Service Commission, after your deposit has been held by the utility for 6 months) when you meet the following criteria: If you remain a continuous customer of the utility, your deposit will be refunded after two years unless at any time during that period you have had two consecutive 30-day arrears or more than two non-consecutive 30-day arrears, or your service has been terminated for nonpayment, or you discontinued service with the utility and left an unpaid balance. Your deposit will be refunded any time you discontinue service, less any unpaid balance.
5. ***You have the right*** to pay your bill without incurring late-payment charges so long as you pay it within 25 days of the billing date shown on your wastewater bill for current monthly charges.
6. ***You have the right*** to be given written notice by certified mail 30 days before your wastewater service can be terminated for nonpayment of your wastewater bill.
7. ***You have the right***, if you do not pay the bill during the 30-day notice period, to an additional 10 days before service is terminated for nonpayment of your wastewater bill.
8. ***You have the right***, prior to a scheduled disconnection of your service, to arrange with the wastewater utility for a Deferred Payment Plan (DPP) to make payment by installments if you can show that you are unable to pay the amount due. In this DPP arrangement, you must make installment payments of not less than 1/6 of the outstanding balance for a period not to exceed 6 months, and you must pay in full your current monthly charges. You are not eligible if you currently are under a DPP and have failed to conform to the terms and conditions.

9. **You have the right** to a credit or refund of the excess amount paid, not to exceed the applicable Statute of Limitations, if the wastewater utility has overcharged you as a result of a misapplied schedule or any other human or machine error.
10. **You have the right** to pay in equal installments a deficient amount resulting from the wastewater utility undercharging you for any one of the reasons stated in # 9 above. The equal installment amount shall be added to the bill over the same number of billing periods during which you were undercharged not to exceed 6 months.
11. **You have the right** to contact the wastewater utility or its authorized representatives at all hours in case of emergency or unscheduled interruptions in your wastewater service.
12. **You have the right** to request information and assistance from the utility in order to secure safe and efficient service.
13. **You have the right** to have a complaint investigated by the utility promptly and thoroughly.
14. If you need assistance with a complaint against your wastewater utility that you cannot resolve by dealing with the wastewater utility on your own, **you have the right** to contact the Office of Regulatory Staff's Consumer Services Department. Consumer Services will work with you and the wastewater utility in an effort to resolve your complaint. The Office of Regulatory Staff is located in Columbia and can be reached by calling its toll free telephone number, 1-800-922-1531 or, if from the Columbia area, (803) 737-5252 or, at www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov.
15. If, after working with the wastewater utility and the Office of Regulatory Staff's Consumer Services Department, you are not satisfied with the outcome of this process, **you have the right** to file a petition against the wastewater utility and request a hearing before the Public Service Commission. To file a petition, you must prepare a written statement with the following information: your name and address, the name of your wastewater utility, a clear and brief statement of the facts surrounding the complaint, and a description of the relief you hope to obtain from the commission. Mail the petition to the Public Service Commission, Chief Clerk/Administrator, P.O. Drawer 11649, Columbia, South Carolina 29211. The Public Service Commission may schedule a public hearing. At the hearing, both you and your water utility may present testimony and evidence before the commission. After hearing the testimony, the Public Service Commission will make a decision and issue an order ruling on your petition.

The South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff wants to inform you of your rights and responsibilities as a consumer, wants you to understand the responsibilities of your wastewater utility, and wants you to call upon its Consumer Services Department if you need assistance. This statement gives you a summary of your rights as a customer of a wastewater utility. More detailed provisions are set out in law, commission rules and regulations, and the tariffs of the wastewater utility.